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(54) Discharge system for milk and an automatic milking system provided with such a discharge system.

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D scription

With known milking systems a herd of animals, usually cows, are milked successively one by one and the milk is carried from milking cups via a valve system to a milk storage tank, which tank is usually cooled and emptied weekly, for example. After all the animals of a herd have been milked, the milking cups and the valve system are washed with hot or cold water, with or without cleaning agent.

In the US-A-4095920 a system for discharging milk is described, said system comprising two or more circuits, each including a milking set and conduits leading from the milking sets to a storage tank through an intermediate reservoir.

The present invention has for its object to improve upon such known discharge system, avoiding cleaning of the complete conduit system and valves, intermediate reservoir and/or conduits of one circuit.

The present invention provides a system for discharging milk from two or more milking sets (19,19') of milking cups (18) to a storage tank (30) comprising

- an intermediate reservoir (6) arranged between the milking cups (18) and the storage tank (30) for storing milk during a predetermined time period and/or a number of milking sessions;
- a cleaning unit (36)
- two or more circuits, each including
 - a milking set (19,19') of milking cups (18)
 - A first conduit (14,16,17) leading from the milking set (19,19') via the intermediate reservoir (6) to the storage tank (30)

characterised in that the system includes a washing unit (9) with a tank (31) and in that each circuit further comprises

- switching means (24) between the milking set (19,19') and the first conduit (16,17)
- a second conduit (32) leading from said switching means (24) to the tank (31)
- washing elements (35) connectable to the teat cups (18)
- a third conduit (33) leading from the washing elements (35) via a switch (34) to the cleaning unit (36)

and in that the switching means (24) and switches (34) are switchable for separately washing of one of the circuits, which is fillable from the cleaning unit (36) with for instance cold or lukewarm water via the second conduit (32), the switching means (24), the milking set (19,19'), the washing elements (35), the switch (34) and the third conduit (33).

The discharge system according to the present invention is preferably used with an automatic milking system as described in EP-A-213 660, 232 568,

277 396 and 323 875 in the name of the same applicant, the contents of which should be deemed as interpolated herein. With a like or other automatic milking system the animals are milked in accordance with their own requirement at times chosen by them, in order to enlarge the milk yield and/or improve the animal's peace of mind.

The present invention provides in addition a discharge system provided with a cooled tank for collecting and storing milk unsuitable for human consumption, which is nevertheless often suitable for feeding to calves and/or for the dairy industry.

The present invention will be elucidated on the basis of an embodiment thereof which is described with reference to a schematic drawing.

A system for discharging milk 1 is preferably arranged in a frame L-shaped in top view so that this system occupies as little space as possible in a corner of for instance a container as described in EP-A-87.202.659.6.

In the subsequent description only those components from the figure are indicated which are necessary for an understanding of the present invention; the symbols of the diagram are self-explanatory to a person skilled in the art in this field.

Disposed in a sub-frame 2 is a vacuum system 3 that serves to generate vacuum in the milking cups. This vacuum system is connected via a line 4 to an intermediate reservoir 6 as well as via a switch 7 to a tank 8 and a cold washing system 9. A compressed air unit 11 is further arranged in the sub-frame 2 to generate compressed air for operating components of an automatic milking system. Also arranged in the sub-frame 2 is a cooling unit 12 making use for instance of cold water that is circulated by a pump 13 via the conduits indicated with broken lines to a cooling for the tanks 6 and 8 as well as for conduits 14, 16 and 17, the function of which will be described hereinafter.

During milking via milking cups 18 of milking set 19 milk is taken from an animal on which the milking cups 18 are arranged and carried via conduit 21 and switching unit 22 via cooled conduit 17, milk quantity meter 23 and switches 24 to the intermediate reservoir 6, which reservoir has a sufficient capacity - for example 185 l - to collect milk during a number of hours of continuous milking.

If the milk discharged from the milking cups 18 is unsuitable for human consumption, for instance milk originating from a cow infected with mastitis or beestings, by applying vacuum to tank 8 via the switch 7 this milk can be guided via the switching unit 22 and the switching unit 26 into this tank 8. Arranged in the shown preferred embodiment of the system 1 for discharging milk unsuitable for human consumption from tank 8 to discharge conduit 27 is a pump unit 28 which provides for this discharge via switching means (not further shown).

A pump unit 29 - likewise provided with switching means - is arranged for discharging the milk from intermediate reservoir 6, which pump unit is connected to the cooled conduit 14 to the usually cooled storage tank.

When washing using a washing unit 9 the vacuum system 3 is coupled to a tank 31, for instance with a capacity of 20 litres, and this is filled from a cleaning unit 36 with for instance cold or lukewarm water via conduit 32, switches 24, via washing elements 35, milking cups 18, switches 34 and conduit 33. The contents of tank 31 can be discharged via tank unit 37 to a sewer pipe 38 or be re-used for circulatory washing of the milking cups 18.

The cleaning unit 36 is per se known from the state of the art and comprises a feed conduit 39 for cold water, a boiler unit 41, a thermostat element 42 in addition to switches 43, 44, 45 as well as a washing vessel 46, and in addition a pump 47 and a conduit 48 are connected to the storage tank 31.

By switching the relevant switches, water of a predetermined temperature, optionally supplied with cleaning agent, can, using the cleaning unit 36, be used to clean both the non-cooled and the cooled parts of the system, that is, the tanks 6, 8 and 31, as well as the milking cups 18 and the switches belonging thereto.

Also designated in the figure is a milking set 19' which is connected in a corresponding manner to the washing system 1 according to the present invention and which can be washed separately, as can be seen from the circuit indicated in the figure.

The embodiment according to the present invention can be provided in a manner not shown with measuring units for checking for instance the amount of liquid flowing through particular conduits, the quality of the milk and the like, in order to safeguard the operation of the shown preferred embodiment 1 of the system.

The valves or switches shown in the figure will usually be remotely controllable from a control unit such as a personal computer, but the present invention does not exclude manual operation of particular closing devices, valves or switches either at their location or from a distance.

Claims

1. A system for discharging milk from two or more milking sets (19,19') of milking cups (18) to a storage tank (30) comprising

- an intermediate reservoir (6) arranged between the milking cups (18) and the storage tank (30) for storing milk during a predetermined time period and/or a number of milking sessions;
- a cleaning unit (36)

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- two or more circuits, each including
 - a milking set (19,19') of milking cups (18)
 - a first conduit (14,16,17) leading from the milking set (19,19') via the intermediate reservoir (6) to the storage tank (30)

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characterised in that the system includes a washing unit (9) with a tank (31) and in that each circuit further comprises

- switching means (24) between the milking set (19,19') and the first conduit (16,17)
- a second conduit (32) leading from said switching means (24) to the tank (31)
- washing elements (35) connectable to the teat cups (18)
- a third conduit (33) leading from the washing elements (35) via a switch (34) to the cleaning unit (36)

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and in that the switching means (24) and switches (34) are switchable for separately washing of one of the circuits, which is fillable from the cleaning unit (36) with for instance cold or lukewarm water via the second conduit (32), the switching means (24), the milking set (19,19'), the washing elements (35), the switch (34) and the third conduit (33).

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2. A discharge system (1) according to claim 1, wherein the intermediate reservoir is coupled to cooling means (12)

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3. A discharge system (1) according to claim 1 or 2, provided with a cooled tank (8) for collecting and storing milk unsuitable for human consumption.

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4. A discharge system (1) according to one or more of the claims 1, 2, or three, provided with a vacuum system (3) connected to the intermediate reservoir (6) and/or the washing unit (36) and/or the tank (8) for milk unsuitable for human consumption.

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5. A discharge system according to one or more of the claims 1-4, provided with a milk quantity meter for measuring the quantity of milk coming from one or more milking cups which is coupled via a cooled conduit to the intermediate reservoir.

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6. An automatic milking system provided with a discharge system according to one or more of the claims 1-5.

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Patentansprüche

1. System zum Abführen von Milch aus zwei oder mehreren Melksätzen (19, 19') aus Zitzenbechern (18) in einen Sammeltank (30), mit
 - einem Zwischenbehälter (6), der zwischen den Zitzenbechern (18) und dem Sammeltank (30) zum Lagern der Milch während einer vorbestimmten Zeitdauer und/oder einer Anzahl von Melkvorgängen angeordnet ist;
 - einer Reinigungseinheit (36)
 - zwei oder mehreren Kreisen, von denen jeder
 - einen Melksatz (19, 19') aus Zitzenbechern (18)
 - eine erste Leitung (14, 16, 17), die von dem Melksatz (19, 19') über den Zwischenbehälter (6) zu dem Sammeltank (30) führt,

enthält,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das System eine Spülleinheit (9) mit einem Tank (31) enthält, und daß jeder Kreis ferner

 - Schaltmittel (24) zwischen dem Melksatz (19, 19') und der ersten Leitung (16, 17)
 - eine zweite Leitung (32), die von den Schaltmitteln (24) zu dem Tank (31) führt,
 - Waschelemente (35), welche an die Zitzenbecher (18) anschließbar sind,
 - eine dritte Leitung (33), die von den Waschelementen (35) über einen Schalter (34) zu der Reinigungseinheit (36) führt,
aufweist,

und daß die Schaltmittel (24) und die Schalter (34) zum gesonderten Spülen eines der Kreise schaltbar sind, der von der Reinigungseinheit (36) mit z.B. kaltem oder lauem Wasser über die zweite Leitung (32), die Schaltmittel (24), den Melksatz (19, 19'), die Waschelemente (35), den Schalter (34) und die dritte Leitung (33) füllbar ist.
2. Abführsystem (1) nach Anspruch 1, bei dem der Zwischenbehälter an Kühlmittel (12) angeschlossen ist.
3. Abführsystem (1) nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, mit einem gekühlten Tank (8) zum Sammeln und Lagern der Milch, die für den menschlichen Verzehr ungeeignet ist.
4. Abführsystem (1) nach einem oder mehreren der Ansprüche 1, 2 oder 3, mit einem Unterdrucksystem (3), das an den Zwischenbehälter (6) und/oder die Spülleinheit (36) und/oder den

Tank (8) für die für den menschlichen Verzehr ungeeignete Milch angeschlossen ist.

5. Abführsystem nach einem oder mehreren der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, mit einem Milchmenge-Meßgerät zum Messen der Menge der von einem oder mehreren Zitzenbechern fließenden Milch, das über eine gekühlte Leitung an den Zwischenbehälter gekoppelt ist.

10 6. Automatische Melkanlage mit einem Abführsystem nach einem oder mehreren der Ansprüche 1 bis 5.

Revendications

1. Système de vidange du lait de deux à plus de deux griffes de traite (19, 19') composées de manchons de traite (18) à un bac de stockage (30) comprenant :

- un réservoir intermédiaire (6) disposé entre les manchons de traite (18) et le bac de stockage (30) pour y stocker le lait pendant une période de temps prédéterminée et/ou pendant un certain nombre de séances de traite ;
- une unité de nettoyage (36) ;
- deux circuits ou plus, chacun d'eux incluant :
 - une griffe de traite (19, 19') composée de manchons de traite (18),
 - une première canalisation (14, 16, 17) conduisant de la griffe de traite (19, 19') au bac de stockage (30) via le réservoir intermédiaire (6),

caractérisé en ce que le système inclut une unité de lavage (9) avec un bac (31) et en ce que chacun des circuits comprend en outre :

- des moyens de commutation (24) entre la griffe de traite (19, 19') et la première canalisation (16, 17),
- une seconde canalisation (32) conduisant desdits moyens de commutation (24) au bac (31),
- des éléments pour le lavage (35) connectables aux manchons des trayons (18),
- une troisième canalisation (33) conduisant des éléments pour le lavage (35) à l'unité de nettoyage (36) via un dispositif de commutation (34)

et en ce que les moyens de commutation (24) et les dispositifs de commutation (34) sont commutables pour laver séparément l'un des circuits, que l'on peut remplir à partir de l'unité de lavage (36) avec par exemple de l'eau froide ou de l'eau tiède via la seconde canali-

sation (32), les moyens de commutation (24), la griffe de traite (19, 19'), les éléments pour le lavage (35), le dispositif de commutation (34) et la troisième canalisation (33).

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2. Système de vidange (1) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le réservoir intermédiaire est relié aux moyens de réfrigération (12).
3. Système de vidange (1) selon la revendication 1 ou 2, pourvu d'un bac réfrigéré (8) pour le recueil et le stockage du lait impropre à la consommation humaine.
4. Système de vidange (1) selon l'une ou plusieurs des revendications 1, 2 ou 3, pourvu d'un système à vide (3) relié au réservoir intermédiaire (6) et/ou à l'unité de lavage (36) et/ou au bac (8) pour le lait impropre à la consommation humaine.
5. Système de vidange selon l'une ou plusieurs des revendications 1 à 4, pourvu d'un mesureur de quantité de lait pour mesurer la quantité de lait venant de l'un ou de plus d'un des manchons de traite qui est relié via une canalisation réfrigérée au réservoir intermédiaire.
6. Système de traite automatique pourvu d'un système de vidange selon l'une ou plusieurs des revendications 1 à 5.

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